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# THE SEWANEE REVIEW

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THOMAS SHADWELL

The last, and perhaps the strongest, of the dramatists of Jonson's school was a man who, owing partly to his indiscretion and partly to his ill-fortune, has had hard measure meted out to him by posterity. It was his indiscretion to challenge, and his ill-fortune to arouse, the enduring wrath of the greatest satirist of the age, who made of him a monumental example at the time, and handed him down to the scorn of succeeding generations. Who now can hear of Thomas Shadwell without recalling Og and MacFlecknoe and Dryden's envenomed lines—MacFlecknoe, absolute monarch of stupidity and tautology; Og, an obese mass of bloated flesh, rolling home, drunk, from a night-cellar? Dryden's lampoon may not have been unjustifiable, as it had been provoked; but it was far from just. Shadwell was anything but dull: he had great vivacity and distinguished comic talent; indeed, in the low walks of comedy that border on farce, he had more ease and lightness than Dryden ever had. He was often coarse in language, it is true; but a rebuke for that fault comes with an ill grace from the author of *Limberham* and of the prologue to *The Disappointment*. But Dryden's attacks, being obviously inspired by political partisanship, probably did not injure Shadwell with his contemporaries. We know that his plays were exceedingly popular, and drew the approval of judicious critics. But he did not recognize, as Etherege did, that the public taste was changing and the audience growing different from that of the Jacobean stage; and he adhered to a school which was becoming obsolete and which he could not rejuvenate,

He failed to imitate his master in working carefully and doing everything as well as it was possible to do it. He was a rapid and careless writer; and ease and fluency will not compensate for a lack of solid construction. But his ill fate with posterity was not to come from defects in his work, but from his having drawn upon himself the reprobation of a man whose words were engraved on monumental brass.

Yet, in a sort of inverted sense, this was a piece of luck for Shadwell. He can never be forgotten as Stapylton, Glapthorne, John Bancroft, or Lodowick Carbell are forgotten. As Marsyas lives in fable only for his flaying at the hands of Apollo, so Shadwell remains in man's memory as the unlucky wight who suffered an unforgettable poetic excoriation. Whether in either case the equivocal immortality was a compensation for the loss of the skin, is a question which only the shades of the victims would be competent to answer.

Of Shadwell's biography there would be little to say beyond mention of his birth and death, the occasion and dates of his works, with the addition that he was poet-laureate and historiographer to William and Mary, but for the fact that whenever his life touches Dryden's it becomes, for a moment, luminous.

Thomas Shadwell was not a Grub Street scribbler, nor a *filius terræ*: he sprang of an ancient Staffordshire family, and his ancestors had been landed gentry from the fourteenth century. His father received a university education and studied the law; but having an ample fortune, did not devote himself to the practice. This gentleman was blessed with eleven children, in themselves no slight charge; and having taken an active part on the King's side in the civil war, spent or lost a great part of his estate. He bore a high reputation for ability and integrity, and filled several offices of honor and trust after the Restoration.

His son Thomas, the dramatist, was born in 1640 at Santon Hall in Norfolk, an estate of his father's. He was educated at Caius College, Cambridge, as his father had been, and afterwards studied law in the Middle Temple. Scott, in his *Fortunes of Nigel*, has graphically depicted the curious relations that existed between the Templars (as the students of law were called) and the lawless crew that infested the adjoining purlieus

of White Friars. Both had originally been monastic establishments. At the dissolution of the Knights Templars, the commanderies and preceptories of the order fell to the crown, and that in London came, in process of time, into the possession of a corporation of lawyers, and in it the law-schools were held. Adjoining this was a monastery with extensive grounds, belonging to the Carmelites or White Friars, and at the dissolution of the monasteries, this property was secularized and built up. As a monastic establishment it originally had privileges of sanctuary—fugitives from justice who could gain admittance to its precincts were exempt from arrest; and thus a sort of outlaw colony had planted itself on the grounds. Although this privilege had been abolished by law, it was stubbornly maintained, and to some extent connived at; and thus these purlieus sheltered a whole population of ruffians, thieves, and law-breakers of all sorts, as well as fugitive debtors, whom the whole community banded together to shelter. It was nicknamed *Alsatia*, because *Alsace*, as a debatable land between France and Germany, under unsteady and lax jurisdiction, had long been a refuge on a larger scale. This district bordered on the Thames, and it was an easy thing for any of its denizens to step into a boat and by crossing the river be out of the jurisdiction of Middlesex.

Only a wall divided White Friars from the grounds of the Temple; and thus a singular sort of alliance grew up between the guardians and the breakers of the law—an alliance which had its conveniences on both sides. If a young Templar was in danger of arrest, he could slip into *Alsatia* and be joyfully welcomed and secreted. If a file of musketeers came down with an order from the Privy Council to arrest an *Alsatian*, and if escape by water was cut off, the fugitive was pretty sure to find the Temple gate unlocked.

Such a state of affairs offered a fine opportunity for the comic dramatist, but Shadwell was the first to make use of it. Very probably, during his residence at the Temple he had occasion to avail himself of *Alsatian* hospitality; at all events he thoroughly familiarized himself with the manners of its motley and roistering population, which he afterwards depicted in his lively

comedy *The Squire of Alsatia*, of which Scott has made free use. In fact Scott, in depicting London life in the seventeenth century, owes a great deal to the photographic pictures of Shadwell.

After completing his legal studies, Shadwell travelled on the Continent, and upon his return mixed much with the witty and literary men of London. He was of a good family, well educated, had seen the world, was vivacious and witty, and no doubt was very acceptable in gay society. His turn for conviviality, which Dryden exaggerated into sottishness, would render him all the more congenial. Either from natural taste or from scantiness of private means, or, as is most likely, from both together, he turned his attention to the stage, which then offered the most promising opening for literary success. He had in himself the elements of a good comic writer. He had vivacity of natural dialogue, a quick appreciation of the humorous and absurd in character, and an intimate knowledge of those lower strata of London life which afforded the best material for low comedy and farce. He had also considerable ingenuity in constructing those busy bustling plots with people coming and going, carrying on several schemes at once, which characterized the Spanish comedy; for such a type of play was then preferred by the public to the simpler and more refined French comedy, in which the incidents serve as the canvas whereon to embroider the witty dialogue.

Shadwell was a devoted admirer of Jonson, whom he took for his master and model. He accepted the doctrine that "humour", that is, the representation and interaction of individual peculiarities, is the only sound basis of comedy. In the preface to his first play, *The Sullen Lovers* (1668), he lays down his views:—

"I have endeavour'd to represent variety of Humours (most of the Persons of the Play differing in their characters from one another) which was the Practice of Ben Jonson, whom I think all Dramatick Poets ought to imitate, though none are likely to come near; he being the only Person that appears to me to have made perfect Representations of human Life. Most other authors . . . in their lower Comedies content themselves with one or two Humours at most, and those not near so perfect Characters as the admirable

Jonson always made, who never wrote Comedy without seven or eight excellent Humours."

He also hits at dramatic writers who give the public "wild romantick tales, wherein they strain Love and Honor to the ridiculous Height that it becomes Burlesque." This is a palpable hit at Dryden and the "heroic" school then in fashion. Dryden, while he greatly admired Jonson's genius and held him unsurpassable in construction and plot, dissented from his theory of humours, laying more stress on dialogue, witty or noble as the subject demanded.

Dryden did not take this boldness amiss. Indeed he was on friendly terms with Shadwell, and joined with him and Crowne in a pamphlet criticising Elkanah Settle's *Empress of Morocco*, a very inferior production, which, however, had met with extraordinary public favor, and — by Rochester's influence, who was at the time an enemy of Dryden — had been acted at Whitehall by lords and ladies of the court; an honor which had never fallen to Dryden's share. These *Remarks on the Empress of Morocco*, though three poets clubbed their wit and spleen to produce them, were clumsy and spiteful rather than keen and discriminating; and Settle answered them with considerable vigor, giving quite as hard knocks as he received.

This, however, is anticipating a little, as the *Remarks* appeared in 1674. *The Sullen Lovers* is founded on the *Fâcheux* of Molière, as the author admits, but he has treated the subject in his own way. The web is too thin, but the action is lively and bustling, and the dialogue brisk, if not eminently witty.

His next play, *The Royal Shepherdess* (1669), a tragi-comedy, was not original, being, as he tells in the preface, a re-working of a piece by "one Mr. Fountain, of Devonshire." In this preface Shadwell takes a shot at Etherege, whose comedy *She Would if She Could* had appeared the year before. Speaking of the play in hand, he says:—

"I find it pleases most to see vice encouraged by bringing in the characters of debauched people upon the stage, and making them pass for fine gentlemen who openly profess swearing, drinking, breaking windows, beating consta-

bles, etc., and that is esteemed among us a genteel gaiety of humour."

Here is an obvious allusion to the two roistering old knights, Sir Jocelyn Jolly and his "brother Cockwood." If a slur, it comes rather oddly from one who was to build his comedies on their very reprehensibilities. Shadwell's point, however, I take to be that Etherege represents these debauched persons as fine gentlemen, moving in good society. Now what the public likes most, the dramatist is bound to give; Shadwell, therefore, will give such characters if people want them, but he will take care to keep them in their proper spheres.

Shadwell's next play, *The Humourists* (1670), tells its nature in the title. The preface—and here I must observe, by way of parenthesis, that Shadwell's prefaces are generally excellent, full of good sense, and written in admirable English, quite as good as Dryden's—contains a warm eulogy of Jonson and his theory of comedy, letting us see at the same time the critic's own views. Mere types, such as a jealous or a choleric man, are not sufficient—there must be something peculiar and individual in the character or the manner of displaying it, which makes it a "humour." But while these humors may be suggested by observation of men, a comical character should not be a caricature of any real person. In this—to say nothing of Aristophanes—Jonson does not bear him out; for he sometimes caricatures real persons, and means them to be recognized.

In another part of this very interesting preface Shadwell distinctly announces the principle which was to be fatal to the permanence of his comedies, as it was to Dryden's. He says: "Fools, knaves, strumpets or cowards, who are the people I deal most with in Comedies." True, Jonson has dealt with a good many raffish personages, but two generations had passed since Jonson's time, and Shadwell did not recognize the drift of the public taste. His audiences were not more moral—indeed they were less moral—than Jonson's, but they were growing more fastidious. Etherege had shown that admirable comic material might be found in good society without going to pot-houses and night-cellars, and the dramatist henceforth must try to please the boxes and not the pit.

He also takes occasion to make some gentle hits at Dryden, who in his *Essay of Dramatic Poesy* had said something that Shadwell could not digest. He wears the velvet glove, however, beginning thus:—

“And here I must make a little digression, and take liberty to dissent from my particular friend, for whom I have a very great respect, and whose writings I extremely admire; and, though I will not say his is the best way of writing, yet I am sure his manner of writing is much the best that ever was.”

—with other complimentary remarks. Having thus saluted, like a fencer before he begins his sword-play, he proceeds. Dryden in his essay had said that it was presumptuous in any writer to try to imitate Jonson. Shadwell asks if a soldier ought to desert his colonel because he is not as great a general as Julius Cæsar. Dryden had intimated that Jonson lacked wit, to which Shadwell replies that the invention and construction of plays which the critic admits to be admirable, conclusively answers that charge. He remarks that whatever else his own play may be, it is, at all events “wholly my own, without borrowing a tittle from any man”; which is another hit at Dryden, whose *Mar-all* was an adaptation—and that at second-hand—of Molière’s *L’Etourdi*, and his *Mock Astrologer*<sup>1</sup> was taken from Corneille, who took it from Calderon, who took it from somebody else.

The personages in *The Humourists* are a very miscellaneous lot; including two coxcombs, one witty and one gallant (like Jonson’s Daw and La Foole), a university pedant, a bawd, and two loose women. One character is certainly unique on the English stage, and, I trust, on every stage; but his peculiar “humour” shall not be recorded on these pages.

Abandoning his boast of entire originality, he next produced *The Miser*, adapted from Molière, and this was followed by *Psyche* (which he calls “a tragedy”, but which is really a masque or an opera-ballet), founded on the fable preserved by Apuleius.

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<sup>1</sup> As Jonson (as he told Drummond) in his youth once disguised himself as an astrologer, with a white beard and a long gown, it is remarkable that he never made dramatic use of a subject so suited to his powers.



Why it is called a tragedy is not clear; for though Psyche is carried down to the shades, she is restored to life and to her lover, is made immortal and placed among the celestials. Indeed, I do not know a piece which ends with such an explosion of felicity. Shadwell says of it that his design was "to entertain the town with variety of music, curious dancing, splendid scenes and machinery." From the descriptions of the scenery and transformations, the whole must have been extraordinarily gorgeous and spectacular. Locke, the King's composer and organist to the Queen, composed the songs, and Draphi, a distinguished Italian musician, the orchestral parts. St. Andre, the first dancer of the time and ballet-master to Louis XIV, arranged the dances.

His next play, *Epsom Wells*, shows marked improvement. The scene is laid at the fashionable watering-place of the time, and the personages at least pretend to respectable social status. It is full of action, intrigue, cross-purposes, and mistakes, much facilitated by the custom of the time for ladies to wear masks out of doors. Sir Charles Sedley wrote the prologue and Dryden charges that Sedley also "larded" the text with wit, which I doubt, as Shadwell had quite as much wit as Sedley. It was received with favor by the public, and repeated, by command, before the Court.

The next year saw the production of *The Libertine*, founded on the old legend of Don Juan, adapted from the Spanish by Molière. Shadwell inserted a good deal of his own invention, considerably lessening the power of this intensely dramatic action by crude monstrosities which degrade the satanic grandeur of the Spanish hero. But the preface is more interesting to us than the text. As he could never keep out of quarrels, he takes this occasion to give a good piece of his mind to his old enemy, Settle, who was now City Poet—an office which the City had created in rivalry of the Laureateship. The particular grievance seems to have been this: not only had Elkanah succeeded in scoring theatrical successes far beyond his merits (in Shadwell's opinion), but in the dedication of his *Conquest of China*, he had had the temerity to indulge in railing against his brethren of the quill to a degree which Shadwell could not

brook. Of the scope and virulence of this railing I cannot speak, as I have never been able to see a copy of Settle's works; but Shadwell rebukes him for his insolence in a fashion that would compel the turning of the meekest of literary worms. He loftily reproves Elkanah, the "hobbling" scribbler of fustian, for his arrogance in calling other poets his "brethren", whereas there is "no manner of relation betwixt him and them: they are all gentlemen, that will not own him or keep him company." What especially sticks in his gizzard—to use a phrase which he himself would have approved—is Settle's audacity in subscribing himself "Servant to his Majesty," as if he were the Laureate instead of that abject thing the City Poet. He winds up his tirade with a solemn declaration that he will never again take the least notice of the creature—a pledge he could no more keep than Settle could help forcing him to break.

For his next play, *The Virtuoso* (1676), Shadwell had the advantage of one entirely new motive for comic action. The foundation of the Royal Society and its experiments and investigations furnished much matter for the wits of the time. The practical importance of natural science was at that time hardly realized outside a very limited circle; and the Society's early experiments and proceedings had naturally much of an amateurish character. Shrivelled apples swelling and mice expiring in an exhausted receiver; little pith-dolls hopping between "electrified" plates; grave men studying under the microscope the mould on an old shoe, or listening in rapt attention to the description of an unprecedented Westphalian wood-louse, were fine game for the satirists; and the *virtuosos*, as they were called, were looked upon as harmless eccentrics and crotchet-mongers—a sort of grown-up children delighted with new toys.

Sir Nicholas Gimcrack, the Virtuoso, has two nieces to whom two young gentlemen desire to pay their addresses. They make the acquaintance of Sir Nicholas, who invites them to his house. Here they are shown into his laboratory, where they find him extended on a table, learning to swim by copying the methods of a frog in a basin, under the guidance of a swimming master. They compliment him on his proficiency and inquire

when he is going to take to the water, and he answers, "Never . . . I content myself with the speculative part of swimming. I care not for the practick. To study for use is base and mercenary." Pure science, as distinguished from applied, we see, was beginning to take on airs. Encouraged by their applause, he explains other experiments of his: he has cured a raging maniac by transfusion of the blood of a sheep. "The patient became wholly ovine or sheepish: he bleated perpetually and chewed the cud. He had wool growing on him in great quantities, and a sheep's tail did soon emerge." To silence any doubts, he produces a letter from his grateful patient, who encloses a lock of his wool.

There is a foolish squire in love with one of the ladies, but he is not allowed by Sir Nicholas to enter his house. In his distress he applies to his friends, the two gallants, who promise to introduce him as the footman of one of them. He is delighted with the scheme, and dons a livery, but when he attempts to speak to the lady, he is sternly rebuked for his insolence by his supposed master, and finally kicked and caned, his master whispering to him that he is obliged to do this while Sir Nicholas is present, or the trick will be discovered. The ladies, who are in the secret, enjoy this extremely.

The play as a whole is amusing, though disfigured by grossnesses which might have been omitted. The frail Lady Gimcrack served Congreve as a model for his Lady Plyant, as the superannuated debaucher Snarl did Otway for his senator Antonio.

Though Shadwell had solemnly declared that he would never again condescend to notice the unspeakable Settle, we presently find the three pugnacious poets at it again in a sort of triangular duel: Shadwell against Dryden and Settle, Dryden against Settle and Shadwell, and Settle fighting them both. Politics, as well as personal rivalry, entered into the whole business. The people, still quivering from the scare of the so-called Popish Plot, were very hostile to the Duke of York, the heir presumptive to the crown, who was a bigoted Catholic. The young Duke of Monmouth, the King's illegitimate son, handsome, of gracious manners, and a staunch Protestant, had become a popular idol, and the intriguing Shaftesbury inflamed his am-

bition. The report was spread, and eagerly taken up, that Monmouth was the legitimate son of a private marriage contracted by Charles while in exile. It was clear that on the King's death a party would declare for Monmouth, and there would be civil war, exasperated by religious hatred. Charles, who dearly loved his son, sent him to Holland, whence, in an evil hour he had the temerity to return without permission—in itself an act of treason—and almost openly assumed the headship of a party of which Shaftesbury was the controlling spirit.

The country was in a ferment. The press teemed with bitter attacks on the King, the Duke of York, and the ministry. Shadwell (who had dedicated his *Psyche* to the Duke of Monmouth) and Settle were both on the popular side, while Dryden brought his unequalled power of satire to the side of the King. Not only was this an almost obligatory duty for the Poet Laureate, but his most valued friends were on that side, and his enemies on the other. Shadwell who never lacked audacity, had not hesitated to kick the crouching lion. Villiers, Duke of Buckingham, assisted by Buller and perhaps others, had made a most witty attack upon Dryden, Howard, Lee, and other "heroic" playwrights, in *The Rehearsal* (acted 1671), which was received with unbounded delight; and the author kept bringing out new and improved versions, so that the interest was always fresh, and Dryden, like the martyr on the gridiron, had continually to turn a fresh side to the roasting. With a martyr's patience he endured it all in silence, or nearly so. Shadwell, who was not called upon to meddle, made the quarrel his own by the dedication of his *Timon* (1678) to the Duke of Buckingham, congratulating his grace on the sound castigation he had administered to fools and poetasters, and congratulating himself that the noble author had honored his, Shadwell's, productions with his princely approbation. This was a little more than Dryden could stand; to be mauled by a Villiers was bad enough; but to be kicked by a Shadwell into the bargain, passed human endurance. It was Caliban's exultant "I'll beat him too!" when he sees his patron cuff Trinculo. Dryden resolved, when the the right time came, to make him a memorable example.

But, for the present, the peace was not openly broken; Dry-

den showed no signs of wrath, and even purred a little. He furnished the prologue (a very bad one) to Shadwell's *True Widow* (1678-9), no doubt at Shadwell's request. This, however, was not so odd. It was the custom to engage brother poets for prologues, and Dryden had a fixed price for his. Perhaps he afterwards thought that he had cast a pearl before a swine, for twelve years later he took it back and prefixed it to a play of Mrs. Behn's.

About *Timon* I need say nothing. Shadwell says that "It has the inimitable hand of Shakespeare in it," but that he "has made it into a play." This he has done by representing Timon in love, and making him, instead of going off in a paroxysm of misanthropy, expire, full of tenderness and affection, in the arms of the fair and faithful Evandra, who thereupon stabs herself.

In the *True Widow* Shadwell has introduced a quite new character in the person of Lady Cheatly, who conducts an extensive establishment and pretends to large estates and great wealth with the view of defrauding those whom she can inveigle into entrusting their fortunes to her hands. She employs agents to hunt out likely victims and draw them into her snares. This part of the dramatic business is well managed. The dialogue throughout is vivacious, easy, and natural to the characters, of whom there is a great variety. This play, as we learn from the dedication, was to some extent revised by Sedley.

In 1680 appeared *The Woman Captain*, one of the best of Shadwell's comedies, and least tainted with grossness. Gripe, a miser, starves his family and keeps his wife, of whom he is jealous, a close prisoner. She has a twin brother, whom Gripe has never seen, who is a captain in the army, and is expected from Holland. She contrives to escape from her captivity, and donning a captain's uniform, assumes the character of her brother. In this disguise she meets her husband, bullies him, beats him, threatens him with death for his ill-treatment of his wife, and finally enlists him with his half-starved servant. The penuriousness of Gripe's housekeeping may have been suggested by Fletcher's *Woman Pleased*, or Wilson's *Projectors*; but I think all these famine-motives trace back to that Odyssey of starvation, *Lazarillo de Tormes*.

When she has her husband once enlisted, she puts him through so severe a course of military discipline that he is glad to escape by signing an agreement of separation, with a liberal allowance. Several ladies fall in love with the handsome captain, and these jealous lovers quarrel with him, but quail before his martial fire; and in all we have a body of excellent comic material well handled.

In November, 1681, appeared Dryden's powerful political satire *Absalom and Achitophel*, Absalom being the young Duke of Monmouth, and the pernicious counsellor, Achitophel, that arch-intriguer, the Earl of Shaftesbury. The Scripture story lent itself surprisingly to the situation, and Dryden showed extraordinary ingenuity in finding biblical types for his contemporaries. Absalom is treated very leniently, as a youth of candid and generous nature, misled by evil counsellors. This was good policy, for Charles's affection for his son was well known; and it was also good taste, for the Duchess of Monmouth had been Dryden's friend and patroness. But Shaftesbury paid for all. Here the effectiveness of the satire was much heightened by a frank admission of the good points in the Earl's character. Dryden took the occasion to pay off some other old scores, among the rest one due the Duke of Buckingham for *The Rehearsal*. Shadwell escaped, but not for long.

Shaftesbury had been committed to the Tower on a charge of high treason just before the final part of the satire appeared, and soon after its appearance the grand jury refused to find a bill against him and he was liberated. Upon this there was a burst of triumph from the Whig party, who caused a medal to be struck in honor of the event, and drew from Dryden another satire, called *The Medal*. The Whig poets, among them Settle and Pordage, opened out in full cry, and Shadwell, always ready for a fight, joined them with a rather acrid lampoon.

Dryden now thought it time to take his exasperating rival seriously in hand, and in 1682 published his *MacFlecknoe*. Richard Flecknoe, an Irish priest, had been reviled nearly a generation before by several writers, with Marvell among them, as most wretched of all wretched poetasters. He was not quite so bad as that; but had he been a second Vergil or a Shakespeare,

his being a Tory, an Irishman, a Catholic, and a priest was a fourfold lien on infamy.

In Dryden's satire—or rather lampoon, since it is altogether personal—old Flecknoe is shown as the aged monarch of the empire of Dulness, who, sinking under the burden of years, resolves to abdicate in favor of his son and counterpart, Shadwell, whose claims to the succession are fully and conclusively set forth, and under whose rule he foresees a vast extension of the realm of stupidity. The attack was justifiable, as Dryden had received great provocation; but as a piece of criticism it was unjust. Shadwell was often coarse, sometimes outrageously so, and his comedies sometimes degenerate into farce; but dull he was not. He had abundant vivacity, brisk and easy dialogue, considerable constructive skill, and a knack of seizing the salient points of ludicrous character and hitting off the follies of the time. Shadwell cried out under this excoriation; but Dryden had not done with him yet. He had taken off only half the skin, and the other half was to follow: he had exhibited him as a dull scribbler, and had now to show him up as an utterly detestable person.

Dryden's two political satires having been so successful—for even Whigs were forced to admit that they surpassed anything of the kind in the language—he decided to add a second part to *Absalom and Achitophel*, and utilize the occasion to pay off some arrears. Most of this part was written by Nahum Tate, a facile versifier; but the master again added about two hundred lines in which he again pays his respects to Shadwell and Settle under the names of Og and Doeg. In these lines he dwells more upon the personal uncomeliness and moral shortcomings of Shadwell: his corpulence, his wine-bibbing, and his haunting of low taverns. Now that Shadwell loved wine—which from another allusion of Dryden's we learn was claret—we may readily admit; but that he was in any ordinary sense of the word a sot, is incredible. That he frequented taverns there is no doubt, for there he picked up many of the raffish characters that figure in his comedies. Doeg Dryden treats more mildly and with a sort of good-natured contempt, as if he were not worth wasting good anger upon.

Shadwell again shrieked, but he was game to the last, and replied in an angry preface to a translation of Juvenal's tenth satire.

In *The Lancashire Witches*<sup>2</sup> Shadwell made a new departure. Quitting London and its vicinity, he lays the scene in the country, with country squires, gentlemen, and rustics for his personages. He gives as his reason the fact that the public was so taken up with politics, and party spirit was running so high, that—since the proper characters for comedy are “fops and knaves”—a writer could hardly indulge in a little satire without its being distorted to a partisan application. Whatever the motive, it was a hazardous experiment. The Catholic party, under the favor of James, who saw the crown already within his grasp, was growing strong and able to make its power felt. The audacious Shadwell, far from getting safely away from the strife of parties, managed to offend two of them, the Catholics and the Churchmen; the latter by the introduction of a knavish parasitical chaplain, which was considered a libel on the clergy, and the former by the presentation of a peculiarly offensive Irish priest. The witches were introduced to give some novelty and interest to the weak plot; but though the author seems to have ransacked all repositories of witch-lore, from Theocritus to Glanvil, the witchcraft business is contemptible.<sup>3</sup> Much of this play was stricken out by the Master of the Revels before it was allowed on the stage.

Shadwell had gone too far this time. He was forbidden to produce any play on the stage, nor was this prohibition removed until the Revolution of 1688. During these nine lean years he suffered severely in health, and was cared for by his fast friend, the Earl of Dorset, who received him as a member of his family at his country seat. The intimate footing on which he stood with that excellent nobleman is an ample vindication of the poet's character from the charge of sottishness.

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<sup>2</sup> The date of this play is usually given as 1681, but in his prologue to *Bury Fair* Shadwell says that he had been forbidden the stage for “over ten years,” and as this prohibition was removed in 1688, it must have been produced earlier.

<sup>3</sup> We have here, I think, the first professed witch-finder in the English drama.



Into this whirlpool of party strife Dryden had also entered, and in 1682 brought out his *Duke of Guise*, in which the allusions to the politics and high personages of the time are remarkable, as well as its extreme Tory partisanship. It was fiercely attacked by the Whig writers, Shadwell contributing a pamphlet of some vigor. Dryden thought the attacks of sufficient consequence to deserve a reply, which he called *A Vindication of the Duke of Guise*, and in which he attacks Shadwell for the last time. The passage begins:—

“Og may write against the King if he pleases, so long as he drinks for him, and his writings will never do it good; for true subjects will not be perverted by his libels, but the wine duties rise considerably by his claret.”

He has a poor fling at Shadwell's corpulence, saying that “he only goes the broad way because the others are too narrow for him,” and says that he (Dryden) has a long list of his derelictions if he chose to produce them, but now leaves him as “not worth further consideration.”

It must be confessed that this is very weak. The wine drinking was an old charge, and that Dryden had no new charge to bring is evident by his not bringing it; and it is certainly not manly to attack a man's character by innuendo, giving him no opportunity of disproof.

The interdict on Shadwell's dramatic production was taken off at the Revolution of 1688, and in that year he brought out his *Squire of Alsatia*, written, in part at least, during his residence with the Earl of Dorset. The plot turns on a situation like that in the *Adelphi* of Terence. Sir William Belford, a wealthy old country gentleman, had been wild in his youth, but with advanced years has become a rigid moralist and severe disciplinarian, curbing with a tight reign his elder son whom he debars from even innocent pleasure and recreation. His younger son has been adopted by a wealthy uncle, who has given him a liberal education and allowed him to see the world. Sir William believes that his laxity has made of the younger a rake and debauchee, while under his own severe rule the older has become a paragon of sobriety and excellence. The uncle warns Sir William that some day the young man will slip his curb, and

plunge all the more wildly into dissipation for his enforced abstinence.

Sir William goes to Holland, where he is long detained, and the elder son escapes to London, where he is resolved to take his fill of gay life. Knowing nothing of the town, he falls into the hands of a pack of sharpers, ruffians, and pimps who, knowing him to be the heir of an entailed estate, lend him large sums on his bond, and lead him into the wildest riot and debauchery. Sir William returning hears of the scandalous and outrageous doings of a young Belford and jumps to the conclusion that this must be his younger son who is fulfilling his predictions. Hastening to his brother, he bitterly complains of the disgrace to the family, all due, as he had forewarned him, to criminal laxity in bringing up, and contrasts the supposed reprobate with his own paragon. As no one knows that the elder son is in London, even the uncle is a little staggered. At last the father's eyes are opened, to his amazement and mortification. The scapegrace, of course, repents and is pardoned, and the rogues get their deserts.

This comedy is interesting for its vivid pictures of the scoundrel-world of London, and is full of action and motley life. It is not surprising that it found extraordinary favor with the public, the theatre, as the preface tells us, not being capacious enough to admit the crowd that thronged to see it.

The Revolution brought another piece of good fortune to Shadwell. His attached and generous friend, Dorset, was made Lord Chamberlain, and through his influence Shadwell was appointed Poet Laureate in Dryden's place.

*Bury Fair* (1689) is a slight thing, rather a farce than a comedy, and is aimed at the affected admiration of everything French, then prevalent among the fops and fine ladies. Mrs. Fantast, beside being a Gallomaniac, is a *précieuse* and interlards with scraps of Latin a discourse which is a jargon of French and English. Some wags dress up a French barber and pass him off as a nobleman upon the fashionable set, who, of course, are fascinated with his perfections.

*The Amorous Bigot* (1690), an indifferent piece of work, was written while the author was in ill health. It is aimed against

the Catholics; and the offensive priest of the *Witches*, a coarse and clumsy caricature of Tartuffe, is violently impressed into the service. The scene is laid in Madrid, but there is no Spanish atmosphere in the piece.

In *The Scowrers* (1691) he returns to his special province, the under-side of London life. The wars which agitated all Europe, and in which English troops often took part, had flooded London with disbanded and penniless soldiers and with rogues and vagabonds who assumed that character, who infested the slums and lived by cheating and violence, forming themselves into lawless bands of ruffians. There were properly no police beyond a few incapable watchmen, and the dark streets, lighted only by a feeble hanging lantern here and there, offered opportunities for any outrage. These ruffians were imitated by dissolute young men of higher social standing; and these gangs under the names of Roaring Boys, Bravadoes, Muns, Tityre-tus, Scowrers, Hawkubites, Mohocks, etc., kept up a tradition of ruffianism, and infested London for more than a century. The Scowrers plied their vocation by ranging the streets with hideous uproar and bellowings, insulting and maltreating people whom they met, invading taverns, where they drove out the company and demolished the furniture, and deporting themselves in all ways as sons of Belial.

In Shadwell's play there are two gangs, one led by Sir William Rant, of the first, and one led by Whachum, of the second rank. Whachum cheerfully admits the superiority of Sir William, whom it is his highest ambition to emulate. He says:—

“There will never be his Fellow. O had you seen him scower, as I did—O so delicately, so like a gentleman! How he cleared the Rose Tavern! I was there, and he and two fine gentlemen came roaring in, the handsomeliest and the most genteelly; turned us all out of the Room and swung us and kicked us—I vow 'twould have done your Heart good to have seen it. . . . And in a Minute's time cleared the whole House, beat the Woman at the Bar, and swaggered by themselves. . . . O if you did but hear him swear and curse you'd be in love with him, he does 'em so like a gentleman! While a company of ye here about

the Town pop out your Oaths like Pellets out of Elder Guns, they come so easily, so sweetly from him, even like Musick from an Organ-Pipe!"

In *The Volunteers*, Shadwell's last play, he satirizes the growing mania for speculation and the promotion of bubble companies; but not so well as Wilson had done it in *The Projectors*, thirty years before. The coward who, by dint of unmeasured kicks and cuffs, suddenly starts up a very paladin and is then for fighting everybody, is amusing, but is borrowed from Fletcher's *Little French Lawyer*. We have two good characters in the two old warriors, one a Cavalier and the other one of Cromwell's Ironsides, which latter has furnished Scott with much of his Roundhead phraseology. This play was not produced until after the author's death, and was published by his widow.

Shadwell died suddenly, Nov. 19, 1692, and was buried in Westminster Abbey.

The literary qualities of Shadwell's work have already been considered. Starting with two fundamental principles: that fools, knaves, and loose fishes of both sexes were the proper material for comedy, and that these, to become legitimate comic characters, must be distinguished by individual peculiarities, his inventive genius and facility in dialogue have produced an extraordinary collection of oddities and perversities displayed in dramatic action. To give solidity and reality to personages who might otherwise have the unsubstantiality of caricature, he has carried realism too far, and often passed beyond all bounds of decorum. But, without justifying his too-frequent grossness, we must not apply the standards of our own time to a writer of the seventeenth century. Much that would not now be tolerated on any stage, was not then thought offensive; and virtuous and well-bred ladies discussed hazardous matters with a plainness of speech which is now inconceivable.

On Shadwell's personal character I do not think there is any stain. His virulent enemy could find no charge against him but that he was a wine-bibber, and this is doubtless exaggerated as violently as the attacks upon his intelligence. A man who for a great part of his life was the esteemed and intimate friend of the excellent Earl and Countess of Dorset and for years a mem-

ber of their family, could not have been a man of indecorous life or equivocal character. But we are not without positive testimony to his worth from the pens of several of his contemporaries. Dr. Brady, the King's chaplain, who must have known him well, eulogizes his character in language so emphatic and circumstantial that I cannot but accept it for truth. He says:—

“Thomas Shadwell was a man of great honesty and integrity, and had a real love of truth and sincerity, an inviolable fidelity and strictness to his word, an unalterable friendship wherever he professed it; and a much deeper sense of religion than many others have who pretend to it more openly. His natural and acquired abilities made him sufficiently remarkable to all that he conversed with, very few being equal to him in all the qualities and accomplishments of a complete gentleman.”

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